



## Thyroid Fine Needle Aspiration Biopsy (FNAB)

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*You are scheduled for a thyroid fine needle aspiration biopsy (FNAB). During this procedure, your doctor takes cells from your thyroid gland to diagnose your thyroid problem. This procedure is usually done in a treatment room by your doctor(s), with the help of a nurse. A technician with a microscope is also present in the room. Sometimes, this procedure is done by a radiologist in the Diagnostic Radiology Department.*

Before the procedure, the doctor will explain it to you, including the risks and benefits. When you have a good understanding of what will be done, you will be asked to sign a consent form giving us permission to do the procedure. Please feel free to ask any questions you may have.

**Preparation:** There is no special preparation. You may eat or drink whatever you like right up to the time of the procedure. But for your comfort, please empty your bladder before the procedure.

In some cases, your doctor may ask you to have a blood test done within 7 days before your biopsy. The purpose of this is to check your “bleeding times” to make sure that your blood clots normally.

If you are taking medications that contain aspirin (such as Anacin, Bayer, Bufferin, Ecotrin, Excedrin, or cough/cold remedies) or nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory medications (such as Advil, Aleve, Celebrex, ibuprofen, Mobic, Motrin, Naproxen, or Vioxx) please inform your doctor before the biopsy. If you don’t know whether your medication contains these ingredients, please ask your doctor, nurse, or pharmacist.

**Procedure:**

- You will be helped to lie on your back on the treatment room table. A towel or small blanket will be placed under your shoulders so that your head and neck will be tilted back. This position gives the doctor the best access to your neck.

- Your doctor will look closely at your neck, and will also feel your neck with his or her fingers and hands. Then the skin on your neck will be cleansed with a liquid containing iodine and alcohol.
- A thin needle attached to a syringe will be inserted through the skin of your neck and into your thyroid gland. The size of the needle is the same as the one used for blood draws from your forearm.
- As the needle is inserted into your neck, you may feel pushing, pressure, or slight pain. (Most patients say that this feels like having a blood draw from the forearm.) While the needle is in your neck, you will not be allowed to swallow, talk, laugh, cough, sneeze, or move your neck or upper body.
- Your doctor will “aspirate” (pull back) thyroid cells into the syringe. The syringe will then be passed to a technician who will prepare the cells to be seen under a microscope. For your biopsy to be useful, enough thyroid cells must be taken. It usually takes between four and eight needle passes to obtain enough thyroid cells. The procedure takes about 1 hour.

**After the Procedure:**

After the biopsy, an ice pack may be placed over the site to decrease any swelling or bleeding. A small bandage will be put on your neck. You will stay in the treatment room for about an hour so that your nurse can observe you for any complications.

When you are released from the treatment room, you may resume your normal activities. If you have neck discomfort, you may take an over-the-counter pain reliever containing acetaminophen (such as Tylenol), if this does not conflict with other medical conditions or treatments. *Do not take medications containing aspirin or nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory for 5 days after the biopsy.*

To prevent infection, keep the biopsy site clean and dry by wearing the bandage for 8 hours. After this time, you may remove the bandage and shower or bathe as usual.

### *Complications*

Complications from this procedure are rare, but check the biopsy site regularly. If any of the following occurs, contact your doctor immediately. If the symptoms are severe, go immediately to your nearest emergency department:

- difficulty swallowing
- bleeding
- increased redness
- increased swelling
- persistent or increasing pain
- discharge (pus) from the site
- persistent cough

### **Special Instructions:**

Please be aware that it is not possible for the doctor or technician to give you a firm diagnosis at the time of the biopsy. In most cases, final biopsy results are ready in 1 to 2 weeks. Your doctor will contact you to discuss the test results and recommend treatments.

If you have any questions about the procedure, ask your doctor or nurse. They are always ready to assist you.



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This information is prepared specifically for patients participating in clinical research at the Warren Grant Magnuson Clinical Center at the National Institutes of Health and is not necessarily applicable to individuals who are patients elsewhere. If you have questions about the information presented here, talk to a member of your healthcare team.

Questions about the Clinical Center? [OCCC@cc.nih.gov](mailto:OCCC@cc.nih.gov)

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